

Actor Brad Pitt



We have never included an actor in our annual "Ten People Who Made a Difference," until now. Brad Pitt and his family live in New Orleans at times. In fact, they have kind of adopted New Orleans. They bought a big, old house in the French Quarter. Why? Well, we think it was for honest reasons. The celebrity and his celebrity wife, Angelina Jolie, have been known for helping folks out who really need the help. In the last couple of years we have kind of gotten to know Brad Pitt. He is an incredibly humble man.

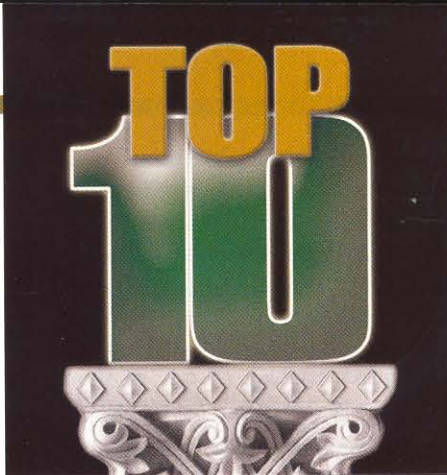
Pitt and his wife helped start "Make it Right" which was announced at the meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative last September. It is a project that will build 150 inexpensive, environmentally sound houses over the next two years in the hard-hit Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood of New Orleans. Last year Pitt pledged \$5 million in contributions to the project.

The green building project will cut upkeep costs, according to Pitt, by 75 percent and the houses are being built to better withstand another hurricane and flood like that of Katrina. Pitt has other plans for his newly adopted home of New Orleans. But for now, helping rebuild the Lower Ninth Ward is first on the list.

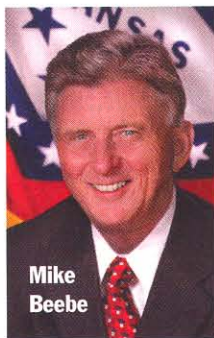
You can contribute to Pitt's cause to bring back affordable housing to New Orleans by going to www.makeitrightnola.org (there's a great video introduction by Pitt when you log onto the site). You can make even small donations, such as "adopting" a tankless water heater for one of the houses, or a solar panel or even the planting of a tree. Sounds like a good Christmas gift.

Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe

Mike Huckabee was Governor of Arkansas for 10 years, taking over for Jim Guy Tucker, who left office prior to the end of his first term. Mike Beebe (Dem.) has been Governor of Arkansas for about 16



PEOPLE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE



months. In Beebe's first full year, we believe more economic development deals were turned in Arkansas than in any of Huckabee's 10 years.

We have written for about four or five years now that Arkansas was primed

for the economic development state spotlight in the South, only to be disappointed in each of those years when the numbers from the SB&D 100 were revealed. While Beebe's first year didn't result in a year that will likely name Arkansas "State of the Year" in the 2008 SB&D 100, (that issue comes out in June) he and his economic development chief, Maria Haley and the entire staff at the newly named Arkansas Economic Development Commission, have certainly earned the recognition that we have given them here.

Alabama Development Office Director Neal Wade

In the mid-1990s, we wrote that Virginia's new economic development agency (at the time), the Virginia Economic Development Partnership "has bought their success in an amazingly effective marketing and advertising campaign." Back then, VEDP had something like a \$6 million advertising budget. Our point was

that they used that money wisely, successfully drawing companies to the Old Dominion State with sound marketing and advertising techniques. Buying your success is certainly not something that should be frowned upon in economic development. It works. The returns from that \$6 million that VEDP spent for a few years in the mid-1990s resulted in more than a tenfold in return. In the 1990s, we named Virginia "State of the Year" three times.

The Alabama Development Office (ADO) has never been flush with cash, for advertising, marketing or whatever helps turn deals in this very important game we call economic development. They have been very competitive in the incentives department, however, doling out to ThyssenKrupp one of the largest incentives packages in U.S. history last year when that German steelmaker announced it would build its \$3.7 billion project near Mobile.

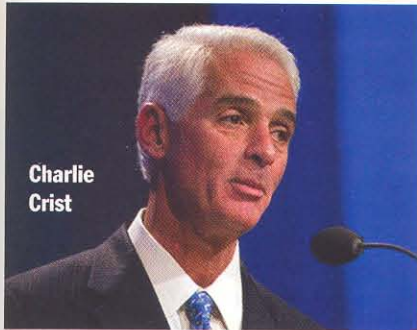
But as an agency, ADO is not a major cash-cow player. Just ask its director, Neal Wade. He took a big pay cut to take that job six years ago when he left St. Joe, the developer of about a million acres of land in the Florida panhandle. Wade's decision to take the director's job at ADO has been a great thing for the state of Alabama. Since Wade took the helm (the best hire Alabama Gov. Bob Riley ever made), Alabama's economy has been on a five-year roll that hasn't been duplicated in the South since Texas' run in the mid-1990s.

Missouri Governor Matt Blunt

This is the second time in three years Blunt has made this list. Missouri's economy has improved so dramatically since Blunt took office in 2006 that it is impossible to keep him off this list this year. His economic development agency, the Missouri Department of Economic Development, has done a great job of keeping the media abreast of what's going on in the Show Me State. St. Louis and Kansas City, two underperformers for years, are now at or near the top of their leagues. It doesn't get much better than this for Missouri. We are giving the young Mr. Blunt the credit.

Florida Governor Charlie Crist

Republican Gov. Charlie Crist is a Southern politician that we have learned to love in the last year or so. As we have predicted over the last eight years or so, if you are not aligned with the political center, then you are not going to get anything



**Charlie
Crist**

done. Crist has vowed to make Florida one of the nation's most progressive green states. In fact, Crist believes that economic development and the environment go hand-in-hand. That is an about-face from his Republican predecessor, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush. Crist's green campaign is so important for a state such as Florida, which sells quality of life more than any single factor in recruiting people and companies to the Sunshine State.

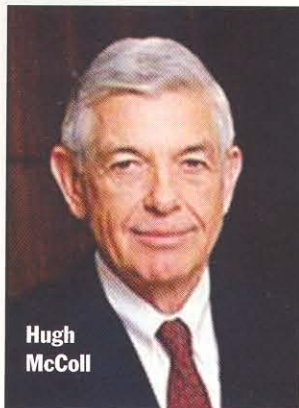
Neal E. Noyes, Executive Director, Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission (Tobacco Commission)

The Virginia Tobacco Commission has done more for Southwest and Southside Virginia this decade than any one entity in Virginia's history. Carthan Currin, III, held this post prior to Neal Noyes getting it. They have both done a tremendous job in the use of the money from the tobacco settlement. They are using the majority of that money transforming rural Virginia's economy.

Danville, hit hard by old-line industry closings, has benefited from this program, as has Martinsville. There are too many markets in Southside and Southwest Virginia that have been helped in dramatic fashion by the Tobacco Commission to name in this short piece. But, money spent is not always money well spent. Of all the states in the South that are receiving tobacco settlement money, Virginia is No. 1 in our opinion on how that money is being used. And Neal Noyes has a firm grip on that bank account.

Hugh McColl

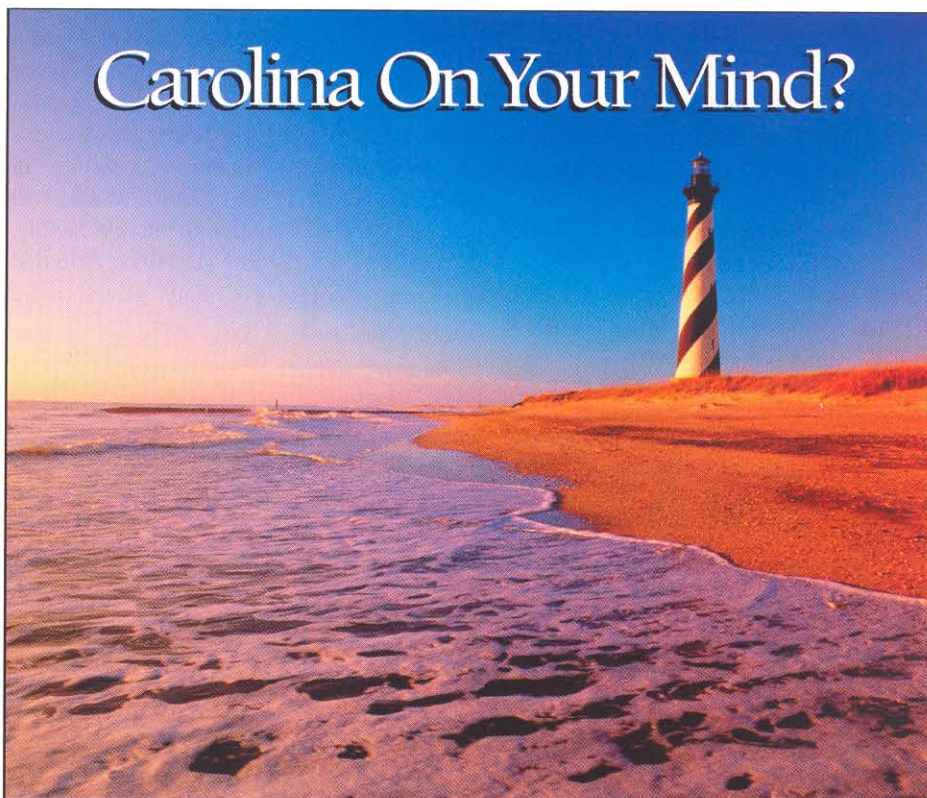
Hugh McColl began his banking career in the 1960s as a management trainee at a small regional bank in Charlotte that would eventually become North Carolina National Bank. He rose through the ranks to become that bank's CEO.



**Hugh
McColl**

Through a series of acquisitions, that bank eventually became NationsBank and later, Bank of America, the nation's largest banking establishment. McColl retired as Chairman of Bank of America in 2001. However, McColl continues to work on improving the Charlotte region's overall economy and quality of life. More than anyone else, McColl can be credited with helping make Charlotte one of the South's most dynamic economies. In this issue, Charlotte is ranked as the No. 1 major market in the South over the last 15 years based on data from our annual ranking, the SB&D 100. No one in Charlotte is more responsible for that success than Hugh McColl.

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Joe Max Higgins, CEO, Columbus-Lowndes (Miss.) Development Link

Last year we cited David Rumbarger, CEO of Tupelo's Community Development Foundation, Gray Swope, CEO of the Mississippi Development Authority and Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, in the "Ten People Who Made a Difference" listing. There's at least one name missing as Mississippi continues its climb up the state ranks in economic development. Joe Max Higgins, more than any single person, is responsible for literally transforming the Columbus, Miss. economy. Some of the South's biggest deals, including the \$300 million PACCAR truck engine plant and SeverCorr's \$900 million steel plant, have been turned in Columbus.

Mark Heath, CEO, Martinsville-Henry County (Va.) EDC

Heath, an economic development veteran who has worked most of his career in Charlotte, and his staff have to be recognized for their work over the course of the last couple of years in Southwest Virginia. If you know economic development in the South, you know Martinsville, Va. Martinsville is the poster child of a rural market that was tied almost exclusively to apparel, textiles and the furniture industries, three sectors that have bled tens of thousands of jobs over the last couple of decades in the South. Today, Martinsville's economy is so much more diverse. In the winter quarter, Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine announced a 150-employee, titanium mill in Martinsville. RTI International Metals will invest over \$100 million in the new facility. And 2006 was the first year since 1996 that Martinsville-Henry County gained more jobs on a net basis than it lost.

Matt Kisber, Commissioner, Tennessee Dept. of Economic & Community Development

Kisber has really settled into his job and the performance of Tennessee's state economic development agency is benefitting from it. Like the Alabama Development Office, DECD has done more with less than any other state economic development agency in the South. Kisber and the department are light years ahead of where they were when they started back in 2002. From our point of view, DECD is as consistent of a performer as there is. Turning deals is one thing. Tennessee is doing that. But doing the little things, like communicating effectively with prospects as well as us, the media, well, we place lots of importance into that. ■



Matt
Kisber

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